



**File Code:** 2670

**Date:** May 26, 2021

**Route To:** File

**Subject:** Forest Order No. 05-15-00-21-07 – Recreation Site, Road and Trail Closure

**From:** Dean A Gould, Forest Supervisor

This document explains my rationale and the regulatory basis for implementing an Order closing specified recreation sites, roads and trails within the Sierra National Forest, as described in the Order and shown on the attached exhibits. The purpose of Forest Order No. 05-15-00-21-07 is to provide for public safety due the unprecedented number of hazard trees, erosion, and repair efforts to respective recreation sites, roads and trails. This Order will be effective from May 27, 2021, through June 23, 2021. I will consider terminating the Order early if conditions change.

In 2016, the Sierra Nevada Range endured an overwhelming amount of tree die-off as a result of drought conditions and bark beetle infestation. The following year, in 2017, the Sierra National Forest received a significant amount of rain, snow, and winds resulting in a large volume of fallen trees. In July 2018, the Ferguson Fire resulted in a large burn area of the Merced River Canyon, impacting roads and trails with significant erosion. Several wildfires since have burned on the Sierra National Forest, including the most recent Creek Fire of 2020, which left much devastation to the Forest's infrastructure. In its wake, the Creek Fire left several fallen and dead standing trees, road and trail erosion, and destruction to recreation sites and facilities. The Creek Fire, with nearly 380,000 acres burned, is considered the largest single fire-start in California's history. Prior to and after its containment, Forest personnel have continued with several projects to repair and treat the damage, in order to provide a safe environment to the visiting public. Until restoration projects and hazard tree mitigations are complete, select recreational sites, roads and trails will remain closed in order to protect the public from hazards associated with occupancy in direct proximity to dead-standing trees and to prevent property damage and/or personal injury. Forest recreation sites in need of repair will continue to undergo construction operations, as well as tree hazard mitigations, and therefore will continue to require closures until safe for public use. Several trails that lie within the Creek Fire burn scar will remain closed until erosion repair and hazard tree clearance can be completed as winter conditions allow.

Over the past month, the Nelder Grove Campground and Interpretive Area, Texas Flat and Fresno Dome Campgrounds have been identified by Forest personnel as hazardous to the public. Several dead-standing trees remain and require mitigation. For this reason, the above-mentioned sites are now reflected in Exhibit A as closed. Furthermore, Forest Road No. 8S08, also known as the Old Railroad Grade, has been determined clear for public travel and is no longer listed in Exhibit A as closed.

Recreation sites, roads and trails closed per Forest Order 05-15-00-21-07, will be listed in an attachment for public reference. These closures will be accomplished with signs and/or



barricades and monitored by law enforcement personnel. Other seasonally designated roads and trails available and open for public use will be accessible in accordance with the Sierra National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map. This Order supersedes Forest Order No. 05-15-00-21-05. Scoping efforts included discussions with California Land Management who concurred with the closures. I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA) under the National Environmental Policy Act. This action falls within the category identified in 36 CFR 220.6(d)(1) - prohibitions to provide short-term resource protection or to protect public health and safety - and does not require documentation in a decision memo, decision notice, or record of decision. I have determined that there are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this temporary closure. Implementation of the decision may begin immediately.

This order includes an exemption for persons holding a Forest Permit for Use of Roads, Trails, or Areas Restricted by Regulation or Order (Form FS-7700-48). Authorization under this exemption will only be provided if I or my delegate determine that the risk to personal health and safety is reasonable considering the circumstances of the request. We may also require appropriate personal protective equipment and other necessary safety measures. I hereby delegate the authority to sign Form FS-7700-48 granting an exemption to this order to the District Rangers of the Sierra National Forest.